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How Domingo Was Converted

This sketch is entirely true, names of persons and places, only, having been changed.

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The village of Chapeo in New Mexico is of fair size, with a parish church and the home of the priest. Two miles distant in the smaller village of El Aguja is a Presbyterian Mission school and church.

I had come down in the fall to take the place of our former teacher and found among the most helpful of the congregation a young man, Domingo, and his wife, Marena. I soon learned that the wife was the daughter of a faithful elder of our mission church and that she had grown up in the church and school, having also attended the boarding-school that was formerly at Las Vegas ; but that Domingo had not joined the church until after his marriage. His family are still all Romanists and live in Los Placentos, though they now all visit at his home in El Aguja, where I have become quite well acquainted with the different members through meeting them there.

It was not until after several months that Marena grew intimate enough with me to tell me of the history of her married life and the conversion of her husband. I will try to give the account in her own words.

I wish you to picture Marena in your mind as a pretty, clear-complexioned girl of seventeen, of a very bashful and retiring disposition, but with a certain fixedness of purpose and determination underlying a quiet demeanor.

I found her alone with the baby one afternoon. We began discussing certain distressing customs of the Mexicans, and she proceeded to tell me how her parents-in-law derided her own and her husband's attempts to reform their manner of living after the American models that she had learned. From that we drifted into her private history.

"Before we were married," she said, "Domingo asked me several times if I would not be married by the priest? But I always told him 'Never;' if he wished to be married by the priest he was free to choose some one else, for I would never consent to it. But he always answered that he would not do that; so finally we were married. Then we went at once to live in Los Placentos and my troubles began.

"Not with him, for he never contradicted me nor tried to force his ideas on me, though often we would sit up till daybreak discussing our faith. But his family did everything to force me into a Romish marriage. They even sent the priest to see me one day when Domingo was away for wood. When he came to the door I at once grew cold and formal; but I got up and said very distantly,

'Walk in, be seated,' then I started for the kitchen. But he stopped me, asking if I was not the wife of Domingo Gutierrez? I told him that I was and asked him what he would have.

"He said he had come to see if I would aid with the collection. I asked him how much it was. He said, fifty cents if I pleased; if not, whatever I could give. I told him I had nothing for him: that if my husband wished to subscribe he could do so when he returned. Then he asked me to what church I belonged. I told him, 'The church of El Aguja." 'Where were you married?' I said, 'In the church of El Aguja.' And from that he began. I can't remember all he said now, nor what I said in reply; but he went on until I said something about image worship, when he got up angrily and said he had always found it useless to talk to heretics. Just then Domingo came to the door. 'What's this?' he asked. I said, 'This priest wants you to give to the collection.' 'Not five cents, Don Cura!' and he went to unload his wood, and the priest took his leave.

"But his family kept on, urging always that I should be remarried by the priest. When the bishop came I consented to go to mass. Then they all thought I would allow the marriage to take place. Everybody's attention was fixed on me and I thought I was the only Protestant in the house; I did not know that

my brother was in the back part of the room. There I sat as still and stiff as I could.

"The little bell would jingle and the people would get up and sit down and make passes across their faces and breasts. I thought it looked like a monkey show. I began to be amused and at last I had to fix my eyes on the floor to keep from laughing out. Then along came my uncle, Philamon, sprinkling holy water over everyone. When he came opposite me he broke the dish and deluged my skirts with the water. The pieces dropped from his hands, but he never smiled nor stopped to pick them up. Fortunately, the service was soon over. I gathered up my wet skirts and went out: When I joined my husband I said laughingly, 'See what grace has befallen me; I am now holier than you all.' When I got home I told my mother-in-law to see how my skirts had been blessed. She could have them, I said, to hang on the wall behind her saint and when there was a tempest she could burn a little piece.

"When I fixed up my rooms my mother-in-law hung a pictured saint on the wall. I didn't notice what it was at first, but when I did I took a pretty picture of a dog that I had and hung just beneath it. Domingo's brother Frujencio came in then and the pictures caught his eye at once. He stopped and said, 'Good heavens, sister! what is that?' 'What?' I said. 'Why, you have hung that

dog beneath your saint.' 'What of it?' I answered. 'If a dog comes into the room and you speak to him, he will at least lick your hand; but speak to either of those pictures and you will get no response. I do not see but that the one is as serviceable as the other, only the dog is the prettier. He tried to argue the question with me. Then Domingo came in,—'What's this, what's the matter?' he asked. I said, 'Ask your brother.' 'What has happened? What is the matter, Frujencio?" My little sister here has hung that picture of a dog beneath the saint,'—whereupon he burst out crying. Then Domingo said: 'But I don't see that that is anything. What is it, anyway? They neither of them speak to us, neither one nor the other ask us for meat or drink.' Then Frujencio went off and would have nothing more to do with us for months.

"But it was very hard. I was not well and grew very thin. I scarcely went out only when my husband brought me here to church; then everyone would ask me how I was getting along; if I had turned Romanist yet, and if I was sick. I would tell them that I was not sick; that it was war to the knife; they might tear away my flesh, but they would not break the bones.

"Then Domingo began to help me. He never had opposed me, and only once after we were married did he suggest a marriage by

the priest. But I told him that if he was not satisfied with his marriage he could get married by the priest if he wished, but he would have to get another wife. He never referred to it again. Then the family turned on him. They said: 'You are a great one to follow in the steps of your wife. You will be led about by the nose. That chit of a girl is very wise—so still and quiet there, one would think she did not know anything. But we will have to call her the wise one;' and they gave me the nickname in derision. Domingo answered them that if it ever happened that he did embrace his wife's religion it would not be because she had persuaded him; but he would do it of his own free will and because he believed it to be the truth.

"I had not been a great Bible reader; and I don't know how I ever got through that time, except the Lord helped me. And what I had learned in the Sunday-school would come back to me. But now I set to work to study my Bible. I thought, if they catch me in some foolish answer I will not be able to withstand them. I was only seventeen, and it was very hard for me. Domingo studied, too, even more than I. He read the New Testament through and through, and stood by me now in everything I said. But one day he said to me: 'Before we were married I was a hard drinker and a very vicious man. But if I ever do confess your religion it will not be

until I am sure I can leave all these vices alone.' And it is true, since we were married I have never seen him drunk nor engaged in any other kind of vice.

"Then we came to El Aguja to live. None of his family would now have anything to do with us nor speak if we met.

"But when he did join the church he never told anyone of his purpose. One communion Sunday when the minister said, 'If there is anyone who would like to unite with us let him come forward,' Domingo rose and went up.

"Afterward he once said to me, 'When I married you I thought it would be easy to win you over to my religion.' 'And I thought,' I said, 'that I never would win you to mine, but our Lord knoweth his own.'

"But it is very hard for a Protestant who marries a Roman Catholic."

A. B.

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† I may say that that is the common state of very many of the Mexican youth Vicious in Spanish means an excessive gambler, horseracer, and indulger in all vicious habits.

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